

fostering competitive helium markets, while providing a better return for American taxpayers.

Currently, the United States is the largest helium producer in the world. The most recent data from the United States Geological Survey indicates that at over 20 billion cubic meters, the total helium reserves and resources of the United States represents roughly 40 percent of the world's helium supply.

Helium is primarily used in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) devices in hospitals, but is also used as a coolant for superconductors, as well as in cryogenics, welding, chromatography, and various other uses.

The Federal Helium Reserve is a strategic reserve located at the Cliffside Storage Facility in Potter County, Texas, near the city of Amarillo. Created in 1925, its original function was to ensure supplies of helium to the federal government for defense, research, and medical purposes.

Through the Helium Privatization Act of 1996, the Federal Helium Reserve evolved to serve four purposes: (1) operating and maintaining a helium storage reservoir and pipeline system view map; (2) providing crude helium gas by contract with private companies; (3) evaluating the Nation's helium-bearing gas fields; and (4) providing responsible access to federal land for managed recovery and disposal of helium.

While the Interior Department currently has the authority to continue funding and operating the Federal Helium Reserve, this authority is set to expire at the end of this fiscal year. Upon expiration, and absent Congressional action, our national supply of helium faces severe turmoil in the form of substantial price increases and market disruptions for American consumers and businesses.

Moreover, the Federal Helium Reserve, which constitutes a large portion of the global supply, is instrumental in controlling price. The large quantity of helium in the reserves means that the Interior Department effectively determines prices paid for helium around the world.

Numerous reports indicate that the Interior Department may be selling helium at below market value, which may have the effect of stifling private investment in new helium supplies. As a result, we risk facing a shortage in coming years as helium supplies diminish.

H.R. 527 addresses this problem by transitioning helium sales to a competitive auction system, thus ensuring a steady supply of helium and allowing users to bid on crude helium from the reserve. Consequently, the law of supply and demand would dictate price rather than having the price controlled by a central authority.

Ideally, I would have liked to see more discretion afforded to the Secretary of the Interior in this bill, particularly with respect to the minimum price charged for crude helium.

The bill requires the Secretary to make a determination as to the minimum sale price at auctions in accordance with various factors, including a confidential survey of domestic helium transactions with the reserve, as well as recent market prices as reflected by auction sales.

Currently under the bill, the Secretary would have the discretion to adjust the minimum price by up to 10 percent if the survey is not reflective of the current market value of helium or if a higher minimum price may result in greater conservation of helium.

However, market fluctuations in recent years have often been in excess of 10 percent. Providing the Secretary with greater discretion to adjust the minimum price in accordance recent trends is desirable to ensure that prices track market value as closely as possible.

In my view, the bill would be improved if the Secretary's discretion were enlarged to authorize adjustments to the minimum price by an amount not to exceed 20 percent.

But taken as a whole, H.R. 527 is a positive step in the right direction. And I want to express my appreciation again to Chairman HASTINGS and Ranking Member MARKEY for their good work.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues in joining me in voting for H.R. 527, "Responsible Helium Administration and Stewardship Act."

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of this important legislation which will ensure U.S. manufacturers of medical devices, computer chips, and balloons continue to have reliable access to helium. Helium is a critical element to the manufacturing and operation of these innovative and competitive industries and their products.

The Federal Helium Reserve is scheduled to close this year. If that should happen, a global helium shortage would disrupt business in these industries and could cause the loss of thousands of American jobs.

In my home state of Minnesota, a large balloon company continues to manufacture their products here in the United States. They depend on reliable access to helium not only to stay in business, but also to continue research and development, innovative engineering, manufacturing, and quality control for their balloon products.

But a helium shortage would negatively impact more than just balloon manufacturing. It would also harm the high tech and medical device communities as well. Approximately 250,000 Americans are employed in the manufacturing of computer chips using helium. These chips are used in GPS, smart phones, and MRI machines. Helium is also used to cool the magnets in MRI machines.

We must pass this legislation to prevent major shocks to these important industries. I urge my colleagues in the Senate to act soon to ensure critical access to helium for the medical device, IT, and balloon industries and to protect these American jobs.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BRIDENSTINE) having assumed the chair, Mr. YODER, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 527) to amend the Helium Act to complete the privatization of the Federal helium reserve in a competitive market fashion that ensures stability in the helium markets while protecting the interests of American taxpayers, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

THE GOSNELL TRIAL

(Mr. STUTZMAN asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Speaker, Kermit Gosnell is a real-life Hannibal Lecter. Gosnell operated an abortion clinic that severed the necks of hundreds of babies and stuffed their bodies into freezers, plastic bags, and cat-food tins. Soon, a jury in Pennsylvania will decide his fate.

Mr. Speaker, the Gosnell case must give us a moment of reflection. Have 40 years of abortion on demand seared our national conscience and given us a false refuge behind euphemisms like "choice"?

More than 3,000 unborn children die in abortion clinics every day in this country. While none of these deaths attract the headlines of the Gosnell case, each loss is a tragedy. Each of these defenseless babies is just as innocent as Gosnell's victims, just as human as you and I, and just as precious as our own children.

There is no moral distinction between killing a baby 5 minutes after birth or ending her life 5 minutes or even 5 days before delivery.

In the coming weeks, more questions will be asked: Who referred patients to Gosnell's house of horrors, and what can be learned from these atrocities?

Today, we all ought to re-examine our national conscience.

THE GOSNELL TRIAL

(Mr. ROSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, every day, over 3,200 children are aborted in this great country, the same country that is called the land of the free and the home of the brave. This isn't just unacceptable; it's a horrific tragedy.

And my heart goes out to all women who feel that abortion is the only option. God made them special and made their children special too. These children aren't free and will never have the option to be brave.

Currently, in Philadelphia, Kermit Gosnell, an abortion doctor, is on trial for multiple counts of murder. One count is for a woman who died during an abortion at his clinic.

The horrific findings in Mr. Gosnell's clinic serve as just one more devastating wake-up call. As a country, we should work to protect everyone, including women and children.

When will we be bold enough to enact serious changes?

These children are precious and are truly gifts. We should not use any taxpayer dollars to fund abortion. And I also believe that we should prohibit abortions for unborn babies who are more than 20 weeks old in-utero, which is why I recently cosponsored the District of Columbia Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.

THE GOSNELL TRIAL

(Mr. SMITH of New Jersey asked and was given permission to address the